BRITISH COLUMBIA

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tel (250) 387-0327
fax (250) 387-0329

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Force

- **British Columbia s unemployment rate increased 0.1 percentage points in July, to 8.6% (seasonally adjusted).** Employment grew by an estimated 21,800 (1.2%) people between June and July, the largest growth since February of this year. The labour force also showed gains of 25,600 an increase of 1.3% from the previous month, after PEI (1.4%) the highest in the country.

  Nationally, the unemployment rate declined 0.1 percentage points to 9.0% (seasonally adjusted) in July. The lowest unemployment rate was Saskatchewan at 5.8%. Newfoundland (19.4%) and Prince Edward Island (14.7%) had the highest unemployment rates in the country.

  Unemployment rates decreased in both Vancouver and Victoria. Vancouver's rate declined 0.2 percentage points to 8.7% (seasonally adjusted 3-month moving average). Employment grew by an estimated 12,000 in Vancouver between June and July. In Victoria, the unemployment rate also declined 0.2 percentage points to 7.6%. *Source Statistics Canada*

Seniors

- **The median income of BC individual seniors (65 years and over) increased $800 from the previous year**. BC seniors had a higher median income ($16,400) in 1995 than all the provinces, but Ontario ($17,700). The Canadian median income was $15,600.

  Senior couples in British Columbia received the largest portion of their total income from pension plans (54%), with private pension plans making up the bulk at 22.9%. Senior couples also reported that 18.3% of the total income came from employment, followed by investment (17.3%) and other income (6.5%).

  The metropolitan areas with the highest median income for senior couples were Ottawa ($52,300), followed by Victoria ($43,800). Couples living in Sherbrooke had the lowest median income ($30,000) in the nation.

  Source Statistics Canada

Census of Agriculture

- **British Columbia farmers led the nation in the use of personal computers for farm management.** In 1996, 24% of the farms (5,144) had personal computers. This figure was up sharply from the 1991 census figure when only 14% reported using a PC.

  The 1996 Census of Agriculture for British Columbia counted the population of pigs at 174,169, buffalo at 6,246, llamas at 2,653, turkeys at 850,680 and chickens at 13,759,261.

  In 1996, there were 21,835 farms throughout British Columbia. Small farms (with less than ten acres) were concentrated mainly in the Lower Mainland (2,993), with Thompson-Okanagan following at (1,678). The largest farms, with between 240 and 399 acres, were located in the Peace River area (251).

  Source Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada

Business

- **The value of BC non-residential building permits rose to $480 million, an increase of 25.5% from the first to the second quarter of 1997.** Commercial projects accounted for most of the activity. BC residential building permits increased 8.1% to $1.0 billion in the same period; the Yukon (35.4% to $8 million) and PEI (8.6% to $15 million) led the nation.

  Source Statistics Canada

Report **Hongkong Immigration**

Did you know...?
Of the 1,474 wildfires in BC during 1995/96 47% were caused by the public, 23% were started by lightning.

Death

- **A study on death, examining twenty years of data, shows a strong seasonal pattern by specific causes.** Predictably, the hard winters saw an above average number of deaths in the months of December through March. Pneumonia and influenza deaths tend to peak in January, paralleling the elevated incidence of the disease in the winter. Cardiovascular deaths, reached a seasonal peak in January and the lowest point in August.

  The trend in motor vehicle deaths shows a peak in the summer months of July and August and a low point occurring in January and February. Since 1974, the average daily number of motor vehicle accident deaths has declined and the seasonal pattern has become less pronounced.

  The greatest number of suicide deaths tend to occur in the spring with a secondary rise occurring again in the fall. The Christmas holiday season, thought to bring about more suicides, actually marks a seasonal low.

  The weekday with the greatest incidence of deaths was Saturday and the lowest occurred on Thursday. Not surprisingly, motor vehicle accidents tend to begin to rise on Thursday and peak on Saturday. By contrast, the daily pattern for suicide is relatively stable.

  Source: Statistics Canada

Life Expectancy

- **The widest life expectancy gap between Canadian men and women occurred in the late seventies**. Since the 70's, the longevity advantage women have enjoyed over men has diminished to 5.9 years in 1995, from a peak of 7.5 years in 1978. Trends in the leading causes of death, particularly cardiovascular disease, shows a greater decline among males than females. The gap also narrowed for chronic pulmonary diseases. Cancer mortality however, showed no substantial change between genders, with the exception of lung cancer, which is now the leading cause of cancer death among women. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Travel

- **British Columbia s major airports, Vancouver and Victoria International ranked second and seventh respectively in Canada for total number of aircraft movements in April 1997**. Vancouver averaged 902 flights a day and Victoria, 516. Vancouver Harbour's daily average was 184 flights. Canada's busiest airport was Toronto's LB Pearson International, handling over 1,000 flights a day.

  The routes between Vancouver and US cities carrying the largest numbers of passengers were Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, San Diego and Las Vegas. Based on activity in the first 9 months of 1996, compared with the same period in 1995, these routes all showed significant rates of increase. The highest growth rate was Las Vegas (up 234%) and lowest was Chicago (up 19%).

  Source: Statistics Canada

Prices

- Manufacturers' raw material prices declined 2.3% in June, to 134.2. Crude oil prices fell 8.3% as supply outpaced demand. Coffee prices more than doubled from a year previous as supply conditions were the leanest in twenty years. Wood prices climbed 0.8% in June, due to higher prices for logs and pulpwood. *Source: Statistics Canada*

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to Statistics Canada has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency s electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as SC plus the publication name or catalogue number.

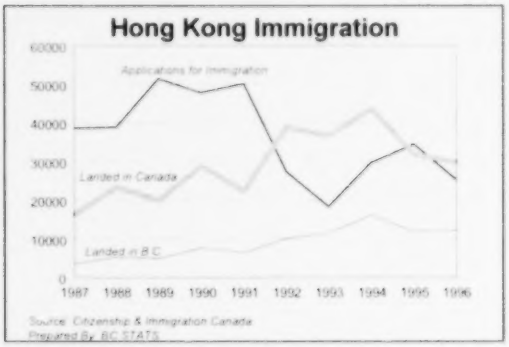
Infoline Report:

August 8, 1997

Immigration From Hong Kong After the 1997 Handover

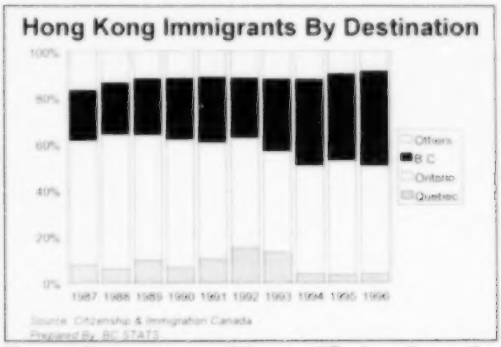
Originally published in *Immigration Highlights*, a quarterly release available by annual subscription for $30 plus GST

One of the frequently asked questions about immigration to British Columbia and Canada is what will happen after 1997 when Hong Kong reverts to China Mainland. Will the number of immigrants arriving from Hong Kong after 1997 drastically decrease, continuously increase, or remain about the same as during the pre-1997 period? Since Hong Kong has been the most important source of immigrants to the province during the last decade, answers to these questions are important to organizations in both the public and private sectors whose planning may depend on the volume of immigrants arriving in the future.



The 1997 handover of Hong Kong is frequently tied to speculation about future Hong Kong immigration because it is generally believed that the return of Hong Kong to China had been a major concern for most Hong Kong residents who chose to emigrate from the colony. Political uncertainty after the handover, added by the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, have created further incentives for many Hong Kong residents to consider emigrating. Since 1987, Hong Kong has been the top source of immigrants to Canada and British Columbia. The number of immigrants from Hong Kong increased steadily since 1987 to a peak in 1994 when Canada received more than 48 thousand and B.C. received more than 16 thousand immigrants from Hong Kong. In 1994, immigrants from Hong Kong alone represented 20.0 and 33.3 per cent of immigrants from all sources to Canada and B.C., respectively.

One common belief about recent Hong Kong immigration is that most residents in Hong



Kong who were capable, qualified and wanting to emigrate due to the perceived uncertain future of Hong Kong had already done so before 1997. Statistics on visa applications for permanent residence in Canada from Hong Kong residents show that the number of visa applications reached its highest level between 1989 and 1991. The number then declined to its lowest level in the last ten years in 1993, then rebounded slightly between 1994 and 1995. In 1996, the number of visa application fell below the 1994 level. The number of Hong Kong residents who applied for immigration to Canada during the first quarter of 1997 was less than one-third of the number recorded during the same period of 1996 (2,738 persons vs. 8,602 persons).

Immigrants from Hong Kong in the business classes seemed to be more affected by the timing of the 1997 handover. The number of entrepreneur and investor immigrants from Hong Kong peaked in the 1992-94 period then declined as 1997 approached. On the other hand, immigrants in the Family and skilled worker classes (Assisted Relative Class and Other Independent Class) tended to be less affected by the 1997 handover. In fact, immigrants in these classes seemed to be more affected by the regulatory changes in Canada's immigration policy. For example, in 1992, the federal government changed the definition of qualified accompanying children under the

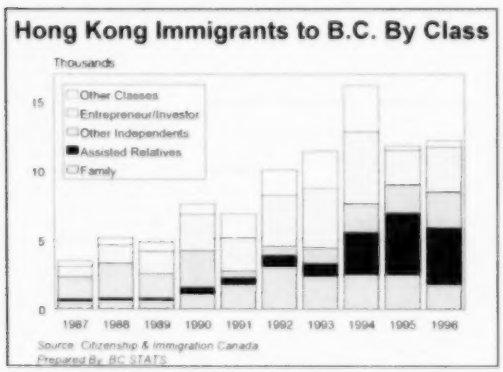
BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BCSTATS@fincc04.fin.gov.bc.ca

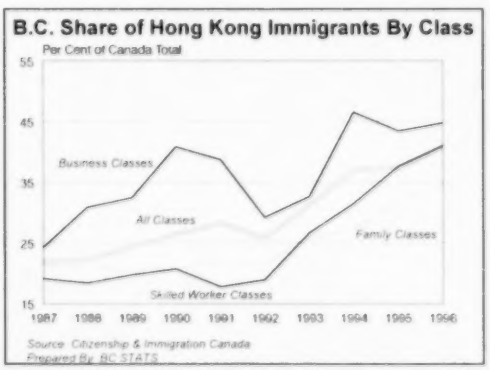
Family Class to allow children over the age 18 only if they were proven to be dependent children. (During the 1988-92 period, never married children were qualified regardless of age.) In response to this announced change, a higher number of applications under the Family Class were submitted prior to 1992 which resulted in a increase in landings from Hong Kong under the Family Class around 1992 and in later years. Similarly in 1993, modifications were made to the point system (used for selecting and assessing independent immigrants) to reduce the number of points given to independent immigrants who have assisting relatives in Canada. The anticipation of these changes prompted more applications in this category and resulted in a sudden increase in landings from Hong Kong under the Assisted Relatives Class in subsequent years.

Assuming Canadian immigration policy remains relatively unchanged in the near future, it is expected that the level of Hong Kong immigrants to Canada will be closely tied to the political and economic stability in Hong Kong, as well as the relative economic condition in Canada. If Hong Kong is to remain relatively stable in the future, it is expected that business immigrants from Hong Kong in the Entrepreneur and Investor Classes will decline steadily. In the first quarter of 1997, Taiwan has already replaced Hong Kong as the leading source of applicants who were granted visas under the Entrepreneur and Investor programs.

The number of family and skilled worker immigrants from Hong Kong is expected to remain relatively stable in the short term since a large number of family immigrants from Hong Kong may be expected in the future due to the wave of Hong Kong immigrants who came prior to 1997. The 1994 federal Immigration Consultation Report and the Immigration and Citizenship Plan 1995-2000 both indicated that more independent skilled worker immigrants would be absorbed in the future. With the anticipation of fewer business immigrants arriving from Hong Kong and the fact that skilled worker immigrants have been driven by domestic economic conditions such as the job market in Canada, it can be expected that skilled worker immigrants and family immigrants will gain in importance in the overall Hong Kong immigration to B.C. and Canada.

While it is difficult to predict the precise level of immigrants coming form Hong Kong after 1997, it is expected that in the near future the overall level of Hong Kong landings in B.C. and Canada will be lower than the peak experienced during 1992-1994 period. However, British Columbia will likely continue to be a favored destination for many Hong Kong immigrants due to its location on the Pacific Rim, mild climate and natural beauty.





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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Apr 1/97	% change on year ago
BC	3,915.9	2.2
Canada	30,202.9	1.1
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT		% change
(BC - at market prices - $ millions)	1996	on year ago
Current Dollars	103,631	1.7
Constant (1986) Dollars	74,001	1.0
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) May	2,855	6.2
Merchandise Exports (raw) May	2,177	-2.2
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) May	2,783	7.4
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change
(all items - 1986=100)	Jun '97	on year ago
BC	139.9	0.9
Canada	138.0	1.8
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change
(seasonally adjusted)	Jul '97	on year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,027	2.2
Employed - BC	1,853	1.8
Unemployed - BC	174	6.7
		Jul '96
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.6	8.2
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	9.0	9.9
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Aug 6/97	Aug 7/96
Prime Business Rate	4.75	6.25
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	5.65	6.13
- 5 year	7.00	8.10
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Aug 6/97	Aug 7/96
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.3867	1.3720
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.7211	0.7289
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	May '97	on year ago
BC	617.63	3.0
Canada	602.63	3.2

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

Released this week by BC STATS

- Labour Force Statistics, July 1997

Next week

- Tourism Room Revenue, April 1997
- Earnings and Employment Trends, May 1997

BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BCSTATS@fincc04.fin.gov.bc.ca